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## EDITOR'S MISCELLANY



REVACCINATION.—With our next-door neighbor, Philadelphia, recording between three and four hundred cases of smallpox, and the recent appearance here in Baltimore of a half-dozen cases quite suddenly, the question of vaccination and revaccination becomes a matter of general interest. And when we stop to think and realize that this one small measure is all we can do to prevent the spread of this dreaded disease, it becomes a matter of grave moment as well. When so great an authority as Dr. Osler plainly says that sanitation cannot account for the diminution in the number of cases of smallpox and for the low rate of mortality, and that isolation, while a useful auxiliary, is no substitute, we see with startling clearness what a protection revaccination is.

It is never claimed that it always affords immunity from smallpox, but statistics show that whenever it is thoroughly and systematically carried out the disease practically ceases to appear, as, for instance, in the German army. Such statistics as follow are evidence of a convincing nature of what revaccination really means. Dr. Osler quotes that out of forty-seven hundred and fifty-four cases the death rate with one mark was 7.6 per cent.; with two marks was seven per cent.; with three marks was 4.2 per cent.; with four marks was 2.4 per cent.

Dr. Welch's further statements say the mortality among those with good scars is eight per cent.; with fair scars is fourteen per cent.; with poor scars is twenty-seven per cent.; unvaccinated, fifty-eight per cent.

The fear of contracting other diseases through the lymph has existed in a greater or less degree for several years, and the public periodically agitates itself over a few reported instances of infection which originated probably in the lack of cleanliness of the individual, rather than impurity of the lymph.

For the fifth time within twelve years we have vaccinated the entire staff, and practically all the inmates, of the hospital. The care and rapidity with which this has been done for five hundred people, and the degree of confidence which it establishes in our minds as to our immunity from smallpox, brings before us the great changes which come about in public opinion and custom, and calls to mind some curious conditions in regard to this matter in various countries. Vaccination here is compulsory; in England it may be declined by anyone who will swear to having conscientious scruples against it. One English writer says that revaccination in that country is as much limited to a class as the practice of dressing for dinner, and is, in fact, a badge of education. This writer states plainly that a single first-class vaccination in infancy will modify smallpox for a lifetime, but it will not protect against infection for more than a term of years, probably from seven to ten. Dr. Osler says that the duration of the immunity is extremely variable, differing in different individuals. In some instances it is permanent, but a majority of persons within ten or twelve years again become susceptible. The vaccination should be performed between the tenth and fifteenth year, and *whenever smallpox is epidemic*.

In his address at the inauguration of the new president of Johns Hopkins University, President Eliot, of Harvard, dwelt with much force upon the great and beneficent service which the medical profession has rendered and is rendering the country; adding of this one thing alone, that were it not for vaccination the American people would to-day have buried millions of their fellow-citizens.—M. A. NUTTING, *Johns Hopkins Alumni Journal*.